

district and circuit courts and only 11 of his remaining nominees have both home-State consent and ABA ratings. Despite false attacks on our record, the Senate has acted with bipartisanship, fairness and expedition on this President's judicial nominees, confirming 98 in just 16 months. We have reduced judicial vacancies from the 110 we inherited to fewer than the 65 vacancies the Republicans began with when they took over the Senate in 1995. Unlike the Republican majority that allowed judicial vacancies grow, we have outpaced attrition and reduced the overall level of vacancies, including the vacancies on the circuit courts.

IN MEMORY OF LIVES LOST IN THE BERING SEA ON OCTOBER 20, 2002

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to express my condolences to the families and friends of men who lost their lives recently because of an accident aboard the *Galaxy*, which was fishing for cod in the Bering Sea.

Aboard the *Galaxy* were First Mate Jerry L. Stephens of Edmonds, Washington; Crewman Jose R. Rodas of Pasco, Washington; and Cook George Karn of Anchorage, Alaska. From the *Clipper Express*: Crewman Daniel Schmiedt of Arlington, Washington.

On October 20, 2002, an explosion occurred aboard the *Galaxy*, a 180-foot vessel fishing for cod off of Alaska's remote Pribilof Islands. Preliminary reports indicate that crew members were battling a small fire below deck when a hatch was opened to allow smoke to escape. This triggered an explosion which ignited multiple fires that quickly superheated its iron hull. With little time to act, the crew scrambled to don survival suits and release lifeboats as they tried to rescue shipmates who had been thrown overboard by the blast.

Captain Dave Shoemaker of Carnation, Washington, sustained burns and broken ribs as he struggled through the fire to make the crucial Mayday call alerting the Coast Guard and other fishing vessels to come to the *Galaxy's* assistance. The heroic efforts of Deck Boss Ryan Newhall of San Antonio, Texas, saved the life of National Marine Fisheries Service biologist Ann Weckback, who was thrown into the icy water without a survival suit. One of the fishing boats which responded to the Mayday call, the *Clipper Express*, was drawn into the tragedy when 24 year old crew member Daniel Schmiedt was swept overboard during the rescue operation.

It may be months until we know what caused the fatal explosion on the *Galaxy*. However, the immediate response of the *Clipper Express* and the other ships that came to the rescue of the *Galaxy's* crew is a testament to the industry. My heart goes out to the families and friends of the four men who died on October 20, 2002. I extend my deep appreciation to all those in the fishing industry and the Coast

Guard who responded quickly to prevent even greater loss of life from this accident.

IDENTITY THEFT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2002

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, the Senate, last night, took a great step toward helping the victims of identity theft, and those law enforcement officers investigating identity theft, by passing S. 1742, the Identity Theft Victims Assistance Act of 2002.

This legislation provides a consistent national remedy for victims of identity theft to restore their credit and their good name. This bill is a critical step in helping victims of identity theft restore their good credit.

Identity theft can be extraordinarily destructive to people's lives. People are denied credit, spend enormous time, effort, and money correcting the problems caused by identity theft, and suffer profound frustration and distress in dealing with the problems that result from identity theft.

These problems often arise when they have the potential to wreak the greatest havoc: when buying a new home or a car, or getting a loan to put a child through college. It can be devastating to make a major life change, only to find out that your creditworthiness has been destroyed by fraud, and it is going to take months of excruciating effort by you to clear your name.

These crimes rarely meet the threshold for prosecution because each crime involves a small amount of money. Meanwhile victims must independently contact numerous federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, consumer credit reporting agencies and creditors over a period of years, as each new event of fraud arises.

One of the most significant problems victims face is gathering the evidence of the fraudulent use of their identity. In order to prove fraud, the victim needs copies of creditors' business records, such as applications, invoices or other information related to the fraudulent transactions. These records are often difficult to obtain because the victim's personally identifying information does not match the fraudulent information on file with the business. Ironically, in the interest of protecting consumer privacy, a business will refuse to provide the information to the victim, believing the victim to be an unauthorized third party.

This bill establishes a nationwide process for all victims of identity theft to obtain business records that are evidence of identity theft to enable a victim to reclaim his or her identity and assist law enforcement in finding the thieves.

This legislation also requires consumer credit agencies to block reporting of bad credit that arises from identity theft, so the harm caused to the victim is stopped dead in its tracks.

The bill also extends the statute of limitation from 2 years to 4 years, giv-

ing victims a reasonable time period to decide whether they need to sue a business under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Finally, the bill amends the Internet False Identification Prevention Act of 2000 to expand the jurisdiction and membership of the Coordinating Committee currently studying enforcement of Federal identity theft law. This will allow the Coordinating Committee to examine State and local identity theft law enforcement and identify ways the federal government can better assist state and local law enforcement in addressing identity theft and related crimes.

The bill is based on a Washington state law enacted in 2001. Other States, including California and Idaho, have enacted similar laws. But identity theft is a national problem growing at an exponential rate. Identity information may be stolen in Washington state and used to perpetrate a fraud in Wisconsin, New Jersey, or Alabama. That is why it is critical that we have passed this bill to help all victims move more quickly and easily through the process of restoring their good name at the least emotional and financial cost as possible.

I thank my colleagues who have worked hard with me to bring this legislation to the floor. Particularly, my thanks goes to Senators ENZI, GRASSLEY and LEAHY, and Banking Committee Chairman SARBANES.

I also want to mention the broad support that this legislation has received. The bill is supported by the National Center for the Victims of Crime, the Fraternal Order of Police, Consumers Union, Identity Theft Resource Center, U.S. Public Interest Group, Police Executive Forum, Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, and Amazon.com, and the Committee has received a letter of support signed by 22 Attorneys General.

The passage yesterday of this legislation is a win for consumers and a win for businesses because identity theft leaves both as victims in its wake. It should be among the highest priorities in the waning days of this Congress that we work together to get the bill enacted into law. The sooner we give victims of identity theft these tools, the more victims we will help and the fewer businesses that will be defrauded by identity theft in the future.

LOAN FORGIVENESS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND ATTORNEYS CAN IMPROVE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I am very proud to join my friend and colleague, Senator DEWINE, as an original cosponsor of two important bills, S. 3165 and S. 3166, to offer loan forgiveness to social workers and attorneys willing to work in the child welfare field. Senator DEWINE has been an inspiring leader on child welfare issues for many years, and I am delighted to work closely with him to continue to